

instances like Julie de Lespinasse, says Sainte-Beuve, *grandes passions* are rare in France; and Stendhal was never tired of flinging that reproach at his father's countrymen, in contrast with the emotional intensity of his maternal Italy. Here, then, the passionate reserve of the English temper, if it does not break out into wild eccentricity, may show in poetry the proverbial depth of still waters. It may, indeed, as with a Blake, a Landor, or a Byron, be both eccentric and aloof at once. 'Tutti gli Inglesi sono pazzi', observed the Florentines of Landor, 'nia questo poi . . . !'; and Landor, in his turn* said of himself, I am alone and will be alone, as long as I live, and after/

There is yet another way in which a culture that is highly sociable and intelligent may hamper poetry. Intelligent societies quickly develop critical theories about ethics and aesthetics, their La Rochefoucaulds and their Boileaus. They may grow more tolerant about morals, but more rigid about manners; both in life and in letters. In consequence, genius may find itself entangled with rules not of its own making. English literature has suffered from the puritan and the Ten Commandments; French from the purist and the Three Unities. There have been times in France when it was less perilous to break many a moral law than an Alexandrine in the wrong place. We have at least escaped an Academy*

An extreme example, in some respects, of

the ways of
English poetry is Spenser, He exhibits our
Germanic
moral earnestness, mingled, often in the most
incongruous
confusion, with the Latin culture and
sensuousness of the
Renaissance, His life is an alternation of
practical activity
with fantastic dreaming, of blood and iron in
Monster
with the milk and honey-dew of Paradise; he
can turn
from the stanzas of the *Faerie Queene*
floating like swan
after swan down a crystal river, to treatises
on the most